1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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during the month of Ramadan, when families co-operate in providing the 'Koran reciter' as well as other guests with tea and food.

Identification with the clan sentiment shows itself in cases of murder, where the clans of both the murderer and the murdered are involved. It is the obligation of the father, son, brother, uncle or paternal cousin to call for vengeance and for the clan to support him, either by claiming compensation (which, however, is seldom accepted if the claim is acknowledged) or by counter-murder, as the Koran ordains that murder should be punished with murder. The two clans through the mediation of another clan have to settle the dispute by deciding the compensation, called 'dia'.

This is no Durkheimian merging of the individual into the group. It is simply a statement of the compelling moral law that the individual, to be in line with the group, should express group-sympathy; if the group is angry, he should be angry, if it is insulted, he must feel that he is insulted.

This pattern of social structure does not apply merely to the Silwa community and the G'afra, but applies in varying degrees to the whole province of Aswan, and many other provinces that are known to the writer in Upper Egypt. In all this, the bond of common descent and family connections is one of the strongest factors as well as the most socially effective force in the social structure.

The village could also be classified into social groups on the basis of age. From the standpoint of age there are three broad social groupings. The first is referred to as 'youngsters' (jahhal), including all boys and girls up to the age of twelve or thirteen years. The second is the unmarried group (fityan), and the third is represented by the married adults, referred to as 'men or women'.

In public there is no free mixing between these three categories as it is considered 'impolite' for a youngster to sit with men, for example, and the converse would be shameful. Youngsters can only be seen in an adult gathering serving tea, or holding the ablution laver and ewer, or as messengers. In the case of young boys, they are marked by their head cap, while unmarried boys wear a turban, and the men besides a turban wear a 'tob' which is a black outer garment, and usually carry a stick or a stave.

Apart from segregation and dress, the age criterion shows itself in outward behaviour, by considering the older people as equivalent to the paternal uncle, or as fathers, or grandfathers if they are very old. Often older people are addressed by the kinship term 'Ammy' (O my paternal uncle), especially if one wants to be 'polite'. If one does not use the kinship term one has to address the older person by the title 'Sheikh' preceding his first name.

Sex is another criterion for two definite social groups: the world of men, and the world of women. In this community it is unthinkable to have free mixing between the two worlds, or that a thing done by one sex can also be done by a member of the other sex. Men have their scope of activities either in the fields or outside the compound, the women are mainly con-

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY

I have a thousand people besides my paternal and maternal uncles.'
When the patient's mother heard the conversation, she offered the doctor her necklace and bracelets.
When the father heard about this, he offered his land and property.
When the sister heard about this, she offered her anklets and earrings.
When his people (i.e. joint family) heard about this, they said 'We shall all pay it with no fuss or difficulty'.

This support shows itself not only when the relatives and friends go to visit the sick person in the village, irrespective as to whether the disease is infectious or not, but also when they visit him in hospital in town. If the person recovers from a serious illness, or comes back home after being away for some time, the people go to congratulate him for his recovery or for his return home by saying 'Let us thank God for your safety'.

To take another example, if a cow or a camel has been seriously injured in an accident, it is killed, and the owner's relatives, neighbours, and friends are morally compelled to buy a portion of the meat to part-compensate for the loss. If a person's animal dies he is consoled by others with the invocation 'May God compensate you'.

Death is another major event in which the family finds itself supported by condolences and sympathies of kinsfolk. If the deceased belongs to the category of youngsters, condolence is compulsory on the clan and intimate friends only. If he belongs to the second and third categories of age groups (unmarried or adults) the whole village has to condole with the sufferers. In death, more than in any other event, kinship ties are the most important factor in deciding one's social obligations. It is incumbent on the close relatives both paternal and maternal, as well as in-laws, to stay away from work and remain in the guest house for ten or fifteen days, and frequently sleep there, or in the case of women, in the house of the deceased relative. Close relatives have to assist in conveying the funeral bier to the cemetery, to mourn the deceased more than others, and to send food to the guest house and to the house of the deceased, normally an obligation more upon the clan house-heads and the close maternal relatives than upon any others.

The same solidarities and mutual family and clan obligations manifest themselves on occasions of rejoicing such as birth, circumcision and weddings, by sending gifts, food, by helping in the preparation of the ceremony, or at least by merely attending in the case of men or sending out a joy-cry in the case of women.

Moreover, the social structure functions also as a means of mediation in the sectional frictions that are bound to arise. In the following example, which the writer witnessed, the head members of a clan mediated between

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613 627 two joint families to 'level all the misunderstandings' between them. The dispute had arisen between the two joint families of 'Amareen and Karamsha, both belonging to the 'Amrab clan, Musiab section. Hag Ahmad 'Imran, the head of the first family, asked the Karamsha to lend him one of their camels to carry some maize straw from the field, but his request was refused because they alleged that they had no camels to spare as they were engaged in building a house. On another occasion, Hag Ahmad 'Imran insisted on taking the camel from one of the Karamsha while he was bringing water to be used in the building; people interfered and the matter was settled for the time being. After three days, he made another attempt and slapped the camel-driver, 'Othman, on the face, cursing his people. 'Othman, the offended man, could not retaliate as Hag Ahmad was the senior man of his family and older than he, and it is 'impolite' according to Arab traditions to slap such a man. People immediately gathered to settle this affair temporarily and prevent any further complications. Then Hag Ahmad's son came on the spot and started to insult 'Othman (who was his brother-in-law) and 'Othman, finding his equal, stood up to the challenge, but people intervened. The dispute, in spite of its temporary ending, had left 'something in the souls of the two houses'.

The 'residue in the souls' came up to the surface when the pilgrims from the clan came back from Mecca and had to be invited by the heads of the clan. The 'Amareen invited the Karamsha to co-operate, but the latter declined. In the meantime, it happened that a member of the Karamsha offered his help for the occasion but was refused by the 'Amareen. This added fuel to the fire and the situation between the two families became tense.

Deputations and mediators went between the two families to fix an 'Arab council' for arbitration. A respected and pious man suggested the family of Badawab for the purpose, but the Karamsha objected on the grounds that the former house was closely related to the 'Amareen. Then the arbitration was raised to the clan level and the Hasaballab clan from 'Onab section (to which neither side belonged) was suggested and this was accepted by both sides. On the appointed evening, the adult members of the two houses came to the Hasaballab guest house, where they were received and tea was served.

[1988] The meeting started by the Hasaballab head clansman reciting 'Wahhidouh ya Gamaa—Say that God is one, O gathering'. Everybody present answered, 'There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his Prophet'. Then the chosen head of the Hasaballab asked the Karamsha, 'What is your story?' 'Abd-el-Gid, the head of the Karamsha, stated, 'We are claiming duties from the 'Amareen'. Then the head of the Hasaballab proposed that after sitting together in their guest house, the two sides should reconcile 'on the white and the reading of Fatiha', meaning that they should root out the past misunderstandings, and should forget all

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about them without going into any argument. The Karamsha, however, who were the accusers, opposed the suggestion and insisted on their case being heard, and consequently their rights being acknowledged. The argument was stated by the head of the Karamsha speaking and being interrupted by members of the disputing house here and there, as well as by members of his house. Then Hag Ahmad 'Imran began to defend his case, and then free argument took place.

One of the most effective devices in the Arab councils is the so-called 'mulakah' (a getting together), where on any dilemma in the course of argument, one or two persons from the mediators take one person or more from the disputing sides for a 'mulakah' to persuade him in a corner, or another room away from the general meeting, through personal and more intimate hearing to follow what the mediators proposed. Their usual form of pressure is to appeal to the person to 'consider the Arabs, or the people, or his kinsfolk'. The idea behind this device is to avoid any personal embarrassment or retreat in public, as this brings shame (*'ar*). If the retreat is accepted on a more intimate level, then the person has retreated owing to the pressure brought upon him because of personal ties or to his considerations to the 'Arabs', yet such a formulation of retreat is only implicit.

However, the 'mulakah' which occurred three times during the meeting did not produce the required effects. The Hasaballah, the arbitrating clan, had then to go outside by themselves to agree on 'the rights of the Arabs which no one now should fear to declare'.

The formulation of the verdict is very interesting as an index of the functioning elements of the social structure. The Hasaballah declared two decisions; the first was that Hag Ahmad 'Imran committed a double wrong by slapping 'Othman the camel-driver, and by not preventing, even by slapping, his son from getting entangled with 'Othman. The second decision was that the clan of 'Amrab, to which the two disputing families belong, had committed a mistake by not mediating between the two families in due time.

As the disputants are morally compelled to accept the arbitration of whoever they agree upon to take this part, the 'Amareen had to shake hands with the Karamsha, followed by all present reading the Fatiha.

Yet this was not the end of everything in this Arab council. Hag Ahmad 'Imran, feeling that injustice had been done to him, immediately declared that he 'claimed rights from Hasaballah', meaning that he wanted to sue the arbitrating clan before another clan, a charge which they have to accept. The case now is between the 'Amareen and the Hasaballah, and they both agreed to appoint the 'Awadallah clan in the neighbouring village to take up the arbitration between them.[1] If the Hasaballah's verdict is considered unjust, they have to pay the 'Amareen

[1] If any clan or family is appealed to by both disputing parties for arbitration, it cannot refuse to act.

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ten pounds; otherwise the 'Amareen have to pay the sum of ten pounds. The payment of money actually takes place, but it is always given back to the payer as 'Arab-coffee' and there is no appeal beyond this stage.

The Arab council is the traditional agent for maintaining law and order in the village, and its composition and functioning reflect the traditional concept of authority. Prestige derived from age, experience, and sobriety combined with power attached to landowners and heads of large families who are well known for their hospitality, are the main qualifications for selection in these councils. Although these principles are not rigidly adhered to in the village itself, they are more observed in composing a council to arbitrate in a dispute in another village. Like Chan Kom, Silwa conceives of a hierarchy of power and responsibility. As in Tepoztlan, government is ideally a fatherly discharge of responsibility by the powerful and able to give benefit to all, but with lesser men taking lesser places.[1] These Arab councils vary in their composition according to the gravity of the issue. They are formed frequently and spontaneously to settle disputes, but their proceedings are almost uniform.

Women have similar gatherings for settling feminine disputes, but they are less formal and lack that atmosphere of solemnity that prevails in men's councils. Men's councils, however, could be convoked to settle women's conflicts creating disruption between two houses, and men are expected to plead the case of the women concerned and undertake the responsibility of making them abide by the council's decision.

In the arguments that take place in these councils, one can hardly fail to notice the importance of the mediators appealing to the kinship idioms to minimize the insult or the loss, or the accusers to exaggerate the offence. 'If my cousins, or brothers do so and so, how would others treat me? . . .'

It is also worth noticing that these Arab councils are held irrespective of civil law procedures. In the case of attack on somebody, or damage to fields or animals, the Arab council has to be formed to smooth the relations between the disputants. The norms and procedures of Arab councils are accepted by common consent as the basis of law and order as distinct from legalistic ways. To appeal to a remote and impersonal power vested in the local or national government is not a socially acceptable procedure, as any dispute should first be discussed by the people involved as well as those who mediate between them. My informant, Ali, regretted the fact that people do not nowadays accept reconciliation according to Arab council verdict, as they used to do; and much recourse is made to legal courts by 'brother against brother' and even father against son.

It is also evident that these Arab councils perform a very useful psychological function. By airing disputes, and transferring the offence from one circle to another in the Arab council, aggression is dissipated and diffused.

In settling damages in Arab councils, the amount has to be fixed by the gathering, but it is shameful not to return the compensation (awad) which should be decided by [illegible]

[1] Robert Redfield, *A Village that chose Progress*, p. 165.

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should be declined by saying, 'God compensates me in a better way'.

The following three instances are concrete situations showing the working of the social structure. The first is the installation of a new corn mill by all the clans in the village to bring to an end the monopoly of the already existing privately owned mill. The rough estimates were divided into 24 kirats (parts), each section responsible for collecting the money equivalent to its 12 kirats.[1] In the second process of distribution, each section divides its share amongst the clans, and the head of each clan is responsible for collecting his share from family heads; by dividing his kirats into sahms, the people of his clan could buy a minimum of one-tenth of a sahm. No section or clan could be helped or its shares be taken by another. It was interesting to listen to the village crier calling out the names of the clans and the two sections, to induce haste in collecting the money.

Such procedure was followed for repairing the village mosque. In this case the question was not so much that of collecting money, as of recruiting the men to bring stone, water, straw, etc., for the repairs; and this was also dealt with on the same structural basis.

The third instance was the allocation of new building land to the village which was also first divided into two sections; then each section was divided into equal parts amongst its clans, which in turn had to divide its share among the families.

The system of village government reflects a combination of central authority agents and the village social organization. The village head is an official called 'Omda' who used to be elected from a list of five people who own not less than 10 feddans. Two years ago, the law was changed and the Omda is now elected from amongst thirteen people who own enough land to make them eligible. The job is unpaid, and it is reckoned as a privilege to be elected. The Omda's seniority is something like the medieval *primus inter pares*. He represents the village on official occasions. One of his traditional and honorary functions is to receive guests, travellers, and government officials in his guest house. Silwa has also two unpaid 'Sheikhs' each representing one of the two sections of the village and thus commonly referred to as 'Sheikh hissa'; these are also elected from amongst those who are eligible (minimum requirement was 5 feddans, now being relaxed. The Omda and the two sheikhs settle the disputes that arise in the village, usually with the aid of Arab councils, or with the help of people whom they select on different occasions. Each sheikh is primarily concerned with the problems of his section (hissa).

The central government is represented by the police headquarters with a police officer or constable in charge and policemen and ghafeers. While the policemen are always from outside the village, the ghafeers are villagers, put up usually from different clans, acting as the Omda's messengers, as well as the local agents between the village and the police headquarters.

[1] The feddan has 24 kirats, and each kirat 12 sahms.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

One of the customs that one would be glad to see die out in Egypt is the blood-feud. As far as I can gather from scholars acquainted with the ancient history of the country, this custom does not seem to be a native one. I fancy it must have been introduced into Egypt at the time of the Arab conquest. It is a very terrible custom, and one that will be very difficult to abolish, for many of these family feuds have persisted for several generations, and still continue with no sign of abatement. The weapons used in con-

FIG. 50. CROWD PULLING THE ROPES TO RAISE THE SUNKEN VESSEL

nexion with blood-feuds are often the same as those used in inter-village fights, though firearms are sometimes employed. The rule is, so I was told, that the murderer, or a member of his family, must be killed by the avenger with exactly the same form of weapon as he (the murderer) used, and, if possible, on the very spot where the murder to be avenged was committed.

One day, as I was riding through the cultivation, an Egyptian friend of mine who was with me pointed to a certain place in the fields where a man had lately been strangled by a large handkerchief being tightly knotted round his throat. Shortly afterward, my friend told me, vengeance was taken by a member of the victim's family, who killed one of the murderer's relatives in the same way

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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THE LAW OF REVENGE

and on the exact site of the crime. Moreover, the same number of knots was tied in the handkerchief used by the avenger as had been tied in the handkerchief used by the original murderer.

On another occasion the train in which I was travelling stopped close to a certain village in Middle Egypt. I noticed that the place was in great commotion; crowds of people had collected in the streets, and there were two or three motors drawn up, evidently belonging to Government officials. In a palm-grove opposite the village were groups of people, mostly women, seated round objects covered up with black cloaks such as are often worn by the men. Presently my servant came to the door of my carriage to tell me what was the matter. His information, collected from various persons on the spot, was practically the same as what I was told later by the officials themselves. It seems that in the village in question there is a long-standing feud between two families, one of which is weak, the other strong. About eight months previously the strong family had fought with the weaker one, and had either killed or severely wounded—I forget which—some of its members. The weak family was not in a position to take immediate revenge, but bided its time, determining to retaliate sooner or later. During the night before my visit fifteen members of the more powerful family had been out in their fields, as water had been turned on for irrigation purposes. It is always necessary on these occasions to see that the water is conducted into the proper channels, and also that no one steals it by altering its course. The men thus employed were widely separated from each other, and during their watch they all fell asleep. The weaker family knew that this might well happen and so give them the long-desired opportunity of taking their revenge. A number of them, therefore, set off from the village at night, and, creeping up to their sleeping enemies, beat them so severely with *nabābīt* that those they did not kill outright they injured so terribly that they were not expected to live—I never heard definitely how many actually were killed, though one rumour, happily an exaggeration, I believe, put the number as high as twelve.

The law of blood-revenge is one of the greatest obstacles to justice with which the police officials have to contend. It is most difficult to obtain evidence, because the witnesses know that, should what they say result in a criminal's conviction, his relatives will certainly take revenge. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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criminals sometimes escape punishment, in spite of the skill and patience displayed by many of the officials in unravelling the mass of conflicting evidence. To this skill and patience I can myself testify, and also to the obstinate refusal of witnesses to give any incriminating evidence, for I have been present over and over again at criminal investigations.

However, we must not pass too harsh a judgment on the attempts of the villagers to frustrate the aims of justice. Even in England people would hesitate to assist the law if it were known that to give evidence against even the most depraved criminal meant almost certain death at the hands of the avengers. Foreigners who have little or no knowledge of the customs prevailing among the peasants are inclined to be too severe in their criticism of the Egyptian officials when they fail to obtain sufficient evidence to convict almost undoubted criminals. But English officials who have lived in the provinces of Egypt and in close contact with the people realize how difficult a matter this is. To my mind the wonder is not the number of crimes that go unpunished for lack of evidence, but the number of criminals whose crimes are detected and who are brought to justice.